

BUILDING THE TRACK TO CCSS

What Teachers Need to Know and Do for Common Core State Standards

BY MARIANNE K. DOVE

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative has been described by national education experts as a high-speed, educational reform-bound train (Johnson, 2012). In the 19th century, the United States needed a nationwide standardized railroad system for transportation and now, in the 21st century, the United States needs a “standard” uniform track for its educational system. Launched in June 2009, the CCSS initiative has been adopted for English language arts and mathematics in all but five states—Alaska, Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

With the CCSS “tracks” laid, the majority of students in the United States will be expected to meet the same academic standards regardless of where they live and go to school. However, as with building the transcontinental railroad, the CCSS tracks are a work in progress. Major projects take time. One aspect not laid out is how these standards will become a reality in the classroom. For those carrying out these standards—teachers—it means joining “rails” and serving as engineers on this innovative, high-speed train to provide a transcontinental American education (Rothman, 2012).

Planning the CCSS Route

The CCSS Initiative is spearheaded by a partnership between the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Though collaborative effort is led by the states, Presidents H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as well as senators and representatives, have enthusiastically supported a common core standards movement.

Business leaders, policymakers, citizens, and parents also see this initiative as key to improving student achievement, eliminating the hodge-podge of states’ standards and tests, promoting post-secondary training, raising the percentage of college graduates, and em-

powering the United States to vie with other countries for global markets (Sloan, 2010). Furthermore, both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) support this initiative (AFT, 2011; NEA, 2010).

The need for rigorous, clearly defined academic standards and learning benchmarks at each level of K–12 schooling across the United States was the driving impetus for creating the Common Core State Standards. Addressing these needs, the common core standards are designed to close learning gaps across states and ensure that educators across the nation deliver instruction and assess student achievement under the same guidelines. Anchored in college- and career-ready requirements, their intent is for students to graduate from high school and attend college without the need for remediation and to enter the workforce with necessary skill sets (King, 2011). These new standards also are written so that American students can successfully compete with international peers.

All Aboard for CCSS Implementation

Examine how your present state standards compare with the CCSS. You can find and download the CCSS at www.corestandards.org and state standards from individual state departments of education (e.g., Arizona: www.azed.gov/standards-practices). Compare the similarities and differences between the CCSS and your state’s standards.

Collaborate in teams of peer colleagues to analyze standards by content area. Given that common core standards generally are more rigorous than many states’ standards, some present grade-level standards may appear at earlier grade levels (Carmichael, Wilson, Porter-Magee, & Martino, 2010; Kober & Rentner, 2011). To learn standards and implement them in curriculum, remember teamwork. Implementation is not done alone!



Dr. Dove is a Professor in the Department of Counseling, Special Education, and School Psychology at Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH. Her research interests include teacher education, exceptional children, and child abuse and neglect prevention and training for educators.

Resources

Gather steam and pull ahead with these high-quality and timely resources about CCSS.

Obtain resources from the Common Core State Standards website (www.corestandards.org/resources). Resources at this site include PowerPoint® slides, PDF files, and videos on YouTube® about the criteria and considerations for common core standards development. Also investigate professional organizations' websites, such as ASCD, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), to find specific guidelines and suggestions for designing curriculum and developing instructional materials that align with the CCSS.

Participate in Kappa Delta Pi's eChapter Webinars and podcasts to keep current with research-based teaching and learning practices. Also seek information from educators and dialogue with colleagues on educational blogs, Facebook, Twitter®, and forums such as the KDP Discussion Board.

Develop the know-how for selecting new learning materials and educational technologies necessary for lessons to reflect the standards. Professional associations can provide this information and recommend vendors which provide materials that align with and measure up to core standards principles.

Determine the professional development supports needed to teach students skills and build knowledge required by the core standards. Clearly communicate these needs with school administrators and work with colleagues. Teacher learning is the engine that drives student learning.

Taking the CCSS Trip

Common Core State Standards present both challenge and opportunity for educators. It is incumbent for teachers not only to support the transition to the CCSS, but also to actively encourage CCSS implementation. With cooperative buy-in, teachers can lay new tracks for this initiative. When laborers joined rails for the transcontinental railroad, they linked the United States economically. By joining together to support Common Core State Standards, a historic effort to bring national unity in academic expectations, teachers are key laborers to link the United States educationally. 🍌

References

- American Federation of Teachers. (2011). *A call for common standards*. Washington, DC: AFT. Retrieved from www.aft.org/issues/standards/nationalstandards
- Carmichael, S. B., Wilson, W. S., Porter-Magee, K., & Martino, G. (2010, July 21). *The state of state*

Common Core State Standards Initiative

www.corestandards.org

First Stop to State Standards

www.aft.org/issues/standards/nationalstandards

National Council of Teachers of English

www.ncte.org

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

www.nctm.org

ASCD

www.ascd.org

Kappa Delta Pi Discussion Board

www.kdp.org/mb/list.php?1

KDP eChapter Webinars

www.kdp.org/communities/echapter.php

KDP Podcasts

<http://ow.ly/ck8b5>

- standards—and common core—in 2010*. Washington, DC: The Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from www.edexcellence.net/publications/the-state-of-state-of-standards-and-the-common-core-in-2010.html
- Johnson, F. (Ed.). (2012, February 27). Common core's good, bad, and ugly. *National Journal: Education Experts Blog*. Retrieved from <http://education.nationaljournal.com/2012/02/common-cores-good-bad-and-ugly.php>
- King, J. E. (2011). *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: An action agenda for higher education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Retrieved from www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=39580
- Kober, N., & Rentner, D. S. (2011, September 14). *Common Core State Standards: Progress and challenges in school districts' implementation*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. Retrieved from www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=374
- National Education Association Education Policy and Practice. (2010). *Common Core State Standards: A tool for improving education*. Washington, DC: NEA. Retrieved from www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/PB30_CommonCoreStandards10.pdf
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Washington, DC: NGA, CCSSO. Retrieved from www.corestandards.org
- Rothman, R. (2012, June/July). Transcontinental education. *Washington Monthly*. Retrieved from http://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/mayjune_2012/special_report/transcontinental_education037193.php
- Sloan, W. (2010). Coming to terms with common core standards. *INFObrief*, 16(4), 1–7. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved from www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/vol16/issue4/full/Coming-to-Terms-with-Common-Core-Standards.aspx